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Official Exercises

Held in celebration of the One
Hundred and Twenty-seventh
Anniversary of the Signing of
the Declaration of Independence
under the auspices of the Com-
missioners of the District of
Columbia : : : : :

1903

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COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND, President

HENRY L. WEST

Maj. JOHN BIDDLE, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

THE Commissioners, in response to a general expression of desire by the citizens of the District of Columbia, provided on the 19th of May, 1903, for an official celebration of Independence Day, and appointed a Committee of Arrangements which, with the assistance of a large number of citizens, planned and executed an appropriate program. The President of the United States approved and cooperated, gave the use of the White House grounds for the public meeting, and expressed regret that he could not attend because of absence from the District. The members of the Cabinet, and the officers of the War and Navy Departments, and the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds gave important assistance to the Committee of Arrangements.

The program included a military procession composed of United States troops, sailors and marines, and the District National Guard, with Gen. S. B. M. Young, Grand Marshal, which marched from the Capitol to the White House in the morning; a public meeting on the White House lawn; and a display of aerial fireworks at the Washington Monument in the evening. A popular subscription provided the necessary funds.

COMMITTEE OF ARRANGEMENTS

HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND, Chairman

W. P. VAN WICKLE, Secretary

CHARLES J. BELL, Treasurer

ADMIRAL GEORGE DEWEY

President, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States

REAR ADMIRAL HENRY C. TAYLOR

President, Sons of the Revolution

DR. J. W. BAYNE

President, Sons of the American Revolution

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State Regent, Daughters of the American Revolution

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REAR ADMIRAL J. R. BARTLETT, U.S.N.

Commander, Commandery of the District of Columbia, Military Order of the Loyal Legion

S. THOMAS BROWN

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WILLIAM F. GUDE

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COL. THOMAS W. SYMONS

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JUDGE IVORY G. KIMBALL

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National Commander, Spanish War Veterans

DR. MARCUS BENJAMIN

President, Society of the War of 1812

PERCY S. FOSTER

Chairman, Committee on Vocal Music

FREDERICK D. OWEN

Chairman, Committee on Reception

NATIONAL CAPITAL INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION.

On July 4, 1903, a celebration of the one hundred and twenty-seventh anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence occurred under the auspices of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia. At ten o'clock a public meeting, largely attended, was held on the lawn beneath the elms in front of the White House.

The president of the Board of Commissioners, the Honorable Henry B. F. Macfarland presided and after preliminary music by the U. S. Marine Band called upon the Reverend D. J. Stafford, D. D., to ask the invocation. Immediately following was the introductory address by President Macfarland, who said:

"The government of the District of Columbia for the first time has invited the citizens of the national capital to celebrate together the national birthday. We are here in response to that invitation which has been so cordially received. We meet, by the courtesy of the President of the United States, who has taken a personal interest in our celebration, at the White House, the official center of the national capital, the official home of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, and every other President except the first and foremost, who is commemorated by the unequalled shaft which rises near us, and, even more impressively, by the city which he founded and which bears his name. Just beyond the White House, in the State Department, is the Declaration of Independence, the rough draft in Jefferson's handwriting, with the interlineations of John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, and the engrossed copy still clear, though the autographs of the signers have so generally faded away. Nowhere could this day be more appropriately celebrated. We hope that it will never cease to be celebrated in the American capital in the good old-fashioned American way.

"The process of declaring the independence of the United States from Great Britain began in June, 1776, with the adoption of Richard Henry Lee's resolution, and ended in November, when the last signature was affixed to the engrossed declaration. But the Fourth of July is the official date at the head of the document itself, and has been accepted as the day for celebration because the declaration was, in fact, adopted, and signed by John Hancock, President of the Congress, on that day. It is interesting to know the exact facts of the proceeding, but not essential. It is enough to know that on the Fourth of July, 1776, the great transaction was officially and practically accomplished and that the bell of Independence Hall that night proclaimed liberty throughout all the land.

"The fullness of time had come in the Providence of God for the act which transformed the English colonists into American citizens. After more than a year of open revolt against the the British government, the colonists slowly and reluctantly changed from rebels into revolutionists and asserted an independence which they had not until recently desired. Even when the hour came their delegates in Congress were not unanimous, and it is doubtful whether a majority of the people approved at the moment what was done. Their consent was not asked. It had to be assumed. The greatest step in our history was taken without submission to even the limited electorate of that time.

"It was the far-seeing leaders of the revolution in and out of Congress—General George Washington, commanding the army of the revolution already triumphant in New England, quite as much as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams—and the far-seeing men and women who were not leaders, that transformed the discordant colonies, in spite of the cautious and the conservative, into the United States. They were carrying on here the fight for government by the people long waged by the Whigs in England. The Declaration of Independence takes its place naturally in the series of liberty documents in which the forefathers of the American revolutionists had already recorded the liberties purchased with blood. The Congress wisely struck

out of Jefferson's draft the reflection on the English people, for it was the English government and not the English people, not, we believe, at least, a majority of the English people, that denied to the Americans the rights of Englishmen. Our revolution was part of the struggle of democracy. It was part of the evolution of freedom preceded by brave efforts on the continent, as well as in Great Britain, and followed by the mighty movement which France led and which transformed Europe.

"It not only gave us independence of Great Britain, but it made us a nation. It was in the name of the whole people, 'by the authority of the good people,' and not in the name and by the authority of the colonies, that the declaration was made. We were a nation in fact before we were independent States, although it took a century and a mighty war to make out of those States a nation which should never be broken.

"It set that new nation, small and feeble though it was, and despised in its day of small things, upon the path that led to expansion and power and glory. It made it possible for it to spread beyond the Alleghanies, beyond the Mississippi, beyond the Rockies, beyond the Pacific, and to become rich and prosperous and influential beyond the dreams of any of the men of that time. It gave the principles which, slowly wrought out in action, tended to make it worthy to be a leader among nations—principles of righteousness, as well as of liberty. For there was no thought in the minds of the men who founded this nation of liberty separated from justice, or of freedom apart from righteous living. They were not planning for license ending in anarchy, but for the ordered liberty of law. It is their greatest glory that they builded even better than they knew, and that they would be astonished if they could see what has been reared upon the foundation which they laid 127 years ago.

"The goodly heritage, spiritual as well as material, left us by our forefathers has grown to vast proportions. We are free forever from the fear of foreign tyranny. We have not only political independence, but political leadership in the world's affairs. Our flags floats over distant lands of which George

Washington never heard, and millions live under its beauty and blessings who cannot read the Declaration of Independence in the original. We have unexampled prosperity at home, unexampled authority abroad. But, as Washington foresaw in his farewell address, we are in danger from foes within the State from foes within ourselves. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' Our political independence, our material power and wealth, will not save us from the moral slavery of Rome and Greece which ended in their destruction. We realize that among the difficulties and dangers which confront us, materialism, nourished by our very prosperity, is the most menacing of all. It manifests itself in money lust; it manifests itself in blood lust. It is the duty of every American to lift up the standard of the spiritual life, of personal and civic righteousness, lest that enemy shall come in like a flood and sweep away our independence. It is not enough to admire and applaud the heroes of the past; we ourselves must be the heroes, and, it needs be, the martyrs of the present. In the faith that the patriots of America will keep alive forever the true 'spirit of '76,' the spirit of self-sacrifice, of splendid courage, of reverent trust in God and of obedience to His will, we may rejoice in the glorious prospects of the republic."

The children of the public schools, under the direction of Mr. E. D. Tracy, sang "My Own United States." Commissioner Macfarland then introduced Admiral George Dewey.

Commissioner Macfarland said: "The most famous admiral in the world, the admiral whose May-day victory spread the American flag, the American power, the American ideals and ideas, over the vast Philippine archipelago, and gave us new standing and greater influence, not only in the east, but in every quarter of the globe; the admiral who made possible the cable to Manila and the messages which President Roosevelt and Governor Taft are exchanging over it in celebration of the day, the patriotic admiral, admirer of Thomas Jefferson and the great Declaration which he wrote, will introduce the reading of it."

Mr. Barry Bulkley, Historian of the Society of the Sons of the Revolution, who was to read the Declaration of Independence, was introduced by Admiral Dewey, who said: "It is my honor and pleasure to introduce the reader to-day of that memorable paper—our glorious Declaration of Independence. I present to you Mr. Barry Bulkley, a native of our beautiful Capital city."

On the completion of this reading the audience united in singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" accompanied by the U. S. Marine Band; after which Mr. Macfarland introduced his Excellency J. J. Jusserand, the Ambassador of France, with the following words:

"Our only treaty of alliance has been with France, our faithful friend of the revolution, without whom it might have failed. We are honored to-day by the Ambassador of France, who shows by his participation his appreciation of our celebration, and who brings with him, as one of his secretaries, Vicomte de Chambrun, grandson of the Marquis de Lafayette. Jusserand is one of the honored names in the interesting list just published by France of the soldiers and sailors, over fifty thousand in number, who, with over five millions in money, were our ally's magnificent contribution to our cause. The ambassador bears that name; he worthily wears our highest university honors. Above all, he is bound to our country by the most sacred ties of personal affection. His presence is most grateful to us, and we greet him with respect and regard."

M. Jusserand then spoke as follows:

"One hundred and twenty-seven years ago, on a Thursday, towards evening, some fifty men, who could not yet call themselves Americans, were gathered in a hall in Philadelphia, which could not yet be called Independence Hall. It was indeed a solemn occasion, one of those great days when the fate of nations is decided.

"No deed, no battle, no treaty was to be, in the whole of modern history, of greater consequence than the act for which

these men peacefully met in the brick house with a bell tower, still to be seen in Philadelphia. For a long time there had been among them those doubts and anxieties which the eminent President of this ceremony, Mr. Commissioner Macfarland has just eloquently recalled, but now they had, as a majority, made up their minds.

"What took place? What words were exchanged? We should like to know them to the minutest particulars. But one thing we know, and that is enough: the men who came were insurgents; the men who left were free men.

"A famous French thinker, Bossuet, said, over two centuries ago: 'By liberty, the Romans as well as the Greeks understood a State where people were subject to nothing except to law, and where law was more powerful than men.' That America would be such a State, your ancestors decided in 1776, and what they decided has been and shall ever be.

"Congress assumed at once the powers, duties, and responsibilities resulting from their decision. They issued letters of marque, in the name of the new State, and, taking their place among free nations, prepared to sign treaties with their peers. One of the first decisions of the first free Congress of the United States of America was that an appeal would be made to foreign nations for an alliance, and a committee of five was appointed to prepare the same. This was a very necessary move, for the task of Washington and of his heroic soldiers was a nearly superhuman one, and gloomy days were in store. This was another momentous hour in the history of this country.

"Amid the silence of the nations, one voice was heard to say: '*Adsum;*'—the voice of France. 'Here I am, willing and ready to risk with you, for better for worse, all I have: life and treasure, what remains of my colonies, and even that newly built navy of mine, the result of so many efforts, a navy just reconstructed at last, after eighty years of indifference and decay.'

"In the first lines of the Act of Independence, it is said that 'all men are created equal.' France considered that the same was true of all free nations, and negotiated with the new born

America of the eighteenth century as if she had been addressing the powerful America of to-day, whose dominions extend from the one to the other of the world's oceans. If there was to be a difference she thought it should be in favor of the new nation; and so all the officers sent over here, had for instructions to render special honors to their American brethren, to consider General Washington as having the rank, not of a general, but of a marshal of France; to yield (one may smile, but in those days it was considered the acme of courtesy) to yield the right side of American regiments on the battlefields.

"Reading the treaty of alliance and the treaty of commerce signed then, one there was who said: 'The great principle in both treaties is a perfect equality and reciprocity: no advantage to be demanded by France, or privileges in commerce, which the States may not grant to any and every other nation. In short, the King has treated with us generously and magnanimously, taken no advantage of our present difficulties, to exact terms which we would not willingly grant when established in prosperity and power.'

"The one who spoke thus was not a man to be carried away by idle sentiments and vain fancies: that one was Benjamin Franklin.

"Truly great things can never be done contrary to the will of the people. The most generous or glorious purpose will be foiled, if the people misunderstands it, and does not heartily second the venture.

"This indispensable element of success was not wanting in the time of the war of Independence: the army of America was an army of free men and of volunteers. As for France, what was the part played by her statesmen and rulers is well known; but not so well known the part played by the people.

"'When I heard of American independence,' said La Fayette, my heart enlisted.' In this memorable word he summed up unawares the feeling of all France. When the gloomy days came and statesmen hesitated as to what should be done, the nation never did, and continued to be for the alliance and for practical help to be sent to those plucky men who wanted to be free.

“Permit me to quote one single fact. When Rochambeau, the same Rochambeau to whose memory you paid last year such a magnificent tribute, was gathering in France the troops ordered for service in America, as our nation wanted to send her best battalions and her best men, all soldiers were submitted to competent examination. There is extant a report explaining how difficult it was to have this order properly carried out. All men were so eager to go that they all declared they were fit; they denied being ill, and concealed any infirmity that might prevent their being chosen.

“After more than a hundred years, the names of all those privates and sailors having been recovered, the Government of the Republic has printed them. No one will deny that they deserved this modest tribute and that those lists of common place names have their eloquence: they are the names of men who fought for these brethren of theirs who wanted to be free.

“Things undertaken in such a spirit are bound to succeed and what the success of your soldiers and ours has been, the whole world knows.

“The nation whose life began one hundred and twenty-seven years ago has become an immense one, and eyes are more and more fixed upon her. On the day we now commemorate (in a ceremony to which I am beyond words proud to be associated), your ancestors bestowed upon you gifts and framed for you duties, the ones and the others equally splendid. They bestowed upon you that peerless gift, liberty; they left for you rules of life, obligations and responsibilities, which will become more and more binding as you become more and more powerful. These duties we have in common with you. Endowed with institutions similar to yours, pursuing similar aims we intend to vie with you, no longer on the battlefield, in view of a liberty which has been won for ever, but in constant attempts to improve the condition of the many, to spread the spirit of brotherhood between men and between nations, to remain in a word, true to the principles proclaimed in your Revolution and in ours.

"Great nations have great duties. Both the American and the French Republics will perform their tasks, not for their benefit alone, but also, let us hope, for the benefit of mankind and for the progress of civilization.

"The fight for better things is an endless one; we shall fight it, you and we, with eyes fixed on the same ideal, the very same marked out by our ancestors long ago; and our flags will move on, always towards the light, and while we follow them we shall be pleased to remember that, if their designs are different yet they display over our heads the same colors."

In compliment to the distinguished guest the band rendered "The Marsellaise." The "Anvil Chorus" was presented by an adult chorus under the direction of Mr. W. J. Palmer.

The Honorable William H. Moody was next introduced by the presiding officer, saying:

"The national government, which takes part so heartily in this celebration, will be represented in the addresses by the Secretary of the Navy, a distinguished son of Massachusetts, which gave us Samuel Adams, the apostle of independence, and John Adams, whose arguments determined the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. The first battles of the Revolution, battles which preceded the Declaration of Independence, and helped to bring it about, were fought within easy reach of his birthplace and the navy of the Revolution was largely recruited from his district. No one can better speak for Massachusetts, or of the United States, than Secretary Moody."

Secretary Moody then said:

"This day's celebration is distinguished by one feature of exceptional interest. We are signally honored by the presence and participation in our ceremony of the personal representative of the President of a sister Republic, the Ambassador of France. He is thrice welcome—welcome for those personal qualities which fit and adorn his high rank, welcome as the ambassador of a powerful and friendly nation, and welcome as

the representative of the people who have a peculiar right to rejoice with us on the birthday of the Republic.

In this day of our prosperity and strength we enjoy the friendship of all nations. We appreciate it and wish its continuance. But we do not forget that France was our friend in the days of our weakness, when with meager resources we were maintaining against mighty odds our struggle for national independence. Without that friendship then the issue of the struggle would have been doubtful if not hopeless. As our ally she gave to us money, she gave to us armies, and, above all, she gave to us fleets.

"It affords me an especial pleasure, which you will understand, to remind you that without the co-operation of the French fleet under De Grasse, the victory over Cornwallis at Yorktown which virtually determined the independence of the colonies, would never have been won. The English lay upon the peninsula beleaguered by the armies of Washington and Rochambeau. They could receive aid only by the sea. They could escape the attacking forces only over the sea. The fleet of De Grasse appeared in Chesapeake Bay at the opportune moment. It beat off the approaching relief and closed the avenue of escape. From that moment the surrender of Cornwallis was inevitable. When it occurred, well might Washington write as he did to De Grasse, 'The honor belongs to Your Excellency.' It is not unworthy of note that, in an official communication to the English Parliament in October last of a memorandum on 'Sea Power,' the surrender of Cornwallis, termed in the communication 'The prelude to the independence of the United States,' was attributed to the failure of the English admiral to maintain himself against De Grasse off the entrance to Chesapeake Bay.

"Having in mind such events as these, it is with knowledge and discrimination, and not with mere words of courtesy, that we welcome you, sir, to our family festival, and express the hope that in yours, which is to come ten days from to-day, your people may understand that we wish them every gift which fortune can bestow.

"It is our custom as the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence comes to dwell upon the circumstances of our history which appeal to our pride as a people. Surely for this purpose there is at our command an abundance of material. If I were obliged to employ a single word which best described the century and a quarter of our national existence it would be the word 'Growth.' We have grown in territory, in numbers, in wealth, in power, in intelligence, and in our general well-being. One has but to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Lakes to the Gulf to be proud of our people and their accomplishment. At the opening of the last century our less than five millions of freemen dwelt along the Atlantic seaboard, near to the sound of the waters beating upon our shore. They have increased and multiplied and swarmed over mountain and river and arid plain until they have conquered the continent from ocean to ocean, developed its resources, wrung from the breast of nature its choicest secrets, and won that power which national wealth confers.

"But it is sometimes wise to preach as well as to give praise. If we would keep what we have won; if we would maintain and strengthen our position among the nations we should purify the sources of national life and guard well the qualities upon which our continued strength as a nation depends. In a government in which all the people equally participate, universal intelligence is demanded. Without it, government by the people must be a failure. The enemy of our institutions finds in ignorance his most effective ally, and the hope of the preservation of a government by the people lies in the education of all—a debt due from the present to future generations.

"The impartial enforcement of the law is the essence of a pure democracy. However else they may differ, whether in intelligence, in wealth, or race, or color, or ability, all men are equal before the law, and the laws which are enforced equally for and against all should be respected by all. The remedy for any wrong should be sought under the law and in the courts which represent the majesty of the people's will. Any departure from this sound principle in any part of the land is

a contempt not only of the courts themselves but of the people who have created the courts. Mob violence puts every man's rights to the doubtful determination of men inflamed by passionate resentment and maddened by the thirst for revenge, renders our voice feeble when raised against oppression elsewhere, and displays a barbarity which shames the nation in the face of the world. Let this people whose government has been called a government of laws and not of men fix upon those who hold themselves above the law and wiser than the law the seal of their condemnation.

"In nothing has the growth of our nation been shown more clearly than in the kind and volume of the public business which it transacts. The truth of this appears upon every side. There is in the service of the people an ever-increasing army of men and women holding positions high and low, from the President of the Republic to the humblest watchman of our public property. Let them once as a body or even in great numbers become corrupt and the nation will surely decay. There is one quality upon which and above and beyond all others—a thousand times above and beyond all others—we must for our very life insist, and that is the quality of public honesty. There is no disease of the body politic so subtle, so powerful so dangerous, so fatal, as the corrupt betrayal of a public trust whether the trust be great or small. I can not but believe that in the main those who do the people's work are honest and true. If it were otherwise I would despair of our future. But at intervals the malignant ulcer of corruption appears in the cities, in the states, in the nation. When it betrays itself it is no time for surface treatment. The knife must reach under every poisonous root that each may be cut out and cast away. Sometimes I seem to see a tendency to condone the offense of those who are guilty of this crime of crimes, to set up in dealing with the Government a standard which would not be tolerated in private life. Take warning lest that thought flourish. Let us not easily believe charges which are made lightly. Let them be investigated with the cold impartiality of a court of law; but if the offense be proved, let the

displeasure of the people come like a thunderbolt from on high. Let not the hand of justice be stayed or its edicts tempered with a misguided mercy. We can forgive all else; we can show mercy to all other offenders; but let the people say that the one sin unpardoned and unpardonable here upon the earth shall be the dishonesty of a public servant.

"We have from the fathers a beautiful heritage. It has been won for us by toil and struggle, agony and bloody sweat. In our day and time it is for us to see that it is transmitted unimpaired and enriched to those who shall dwell here when our day is done."

The exercises came to a close by the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner" followed by a benediction from the Reverend T. S. Hamlin, D. D.

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